



# KOLYA SINIT'SIN'S DIARY

*By*

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May 28

This is a great day for me—school is over and I have been passed into the next form with top marks. Tomorrow we break up for the summer holidays. I have decided to keep a diary during the holidays. Mother says she will buy me a fountain-pen if I promise to write regularly in my diary. So I have bought a thick writing-pad with a blue cover and now I am going to write down all the interesting things that happen to me. Whenever something interesting happens I shall take out my diary and write it down. I also intend to write down my thoughts. I shall think about all sorts of things and as soon as some clever thought comes into my head I shall write it down. There is nothing interesting to write about today. No thoughts either.

May 29

Nothing interesting happened today either. The same applies to thoughts. That is perhaps because I spent all my free time playing out in the yard with the boys and I had no time to think. Never mind. Something may turn up tomorrow.

May 30

Again nothing happened. No thoughts either for some reason. In fact, I don't know what to write about. Perhaps I ought to invent something? But that wouldn't be a diary. In a diary everything has to be true.

May 31

Today we had a meeting of our Young Pioneer group. Yura Kuskov, our group leader, spoke.

"Well, boys," he said, "summer is here and the holidays have begun. Some of you may perhaps think that in summer-time you needn't do anything except play. But that's a mistake. Real Pioneers carry on with their work all the year round, they never waste time. So let's think of something interesting to do this summer, something we can all do together."

We thought and thought, but no one could think of anything. Then Vitya Almazov said:

"We could work on our vegetable plot."

"Too late," said Yura. "The Second group thought of that first. They have already planted cucumbers and tomatoes and pumpkins."

"Let's plant trees in the school garden," suggested Zhenya Shemyakin.

"Just a couple of months late," said Yura. "Trees must be planted early in spring. Besides, there's no room for any more trees."

"Let's collect postage stamps," said Fedya Ovsyannikov. "I love stamp-collecting."

"That's not much of an occupation for the whole group. We can each collect stamps for ourselves."

"We could collect candy wrappers then," ventured Grisha Yakushkin.

"Candy wrappers!" scoffed Pavlik Grachyov. "You'll be suggesting we collect match-boxes next. What's the good of collecting things like that. It's useful work we want."

We racked our brains but we couldn't think of anything suitable. Yura told us to go home and think it over. In a couple of days we would get together again and discuss the different proposals.

I went home intending to think but I went out to play with the boys in the yard for a while before dinner and forgot all about it. After dinner I played some more, then I came home and had supper and went out again. In the evening I sat down to write my diary, but Mum said it was time for bed. Then I remembered I was supposed to think about work for the summer. But you can think just as well lying down as sitting up. So I'll go to bed and do my thinking there.

June 1

Last night I went to bed and began to think. But instead of thinking about work for the summer, all sorts of other thoughts kept coming into my head. I thought about seas and oceans and all the sharks and

whales that live in the ocean, and I wondered why whales were so big and what would happen if whales lived on land and walked about the streets, and where we would live if a whale should bump into our house.

Oh dear, I said to myself, that isn't what I ought to be thinking of at all. I tried hard to keep my mind on summer work, but all I could think of was animals—horses and donkeys. I wondered why horses were big and donkeys little; perhaps horses are only big donkeys, after all. And why do camels have humps, and elephants trunks, and what if camels had trunks as well as humps, would they be camels or camel-haired elephants?

There I was right off the track again, and no matter how I tried, my thoughts kept wandering all over the place. I saw that with a head like mine it was no use even trying to think, and so I fell asleep.

#### June 2

Hurrah! Mother has given me a fountain-pen! Now I shall only write with my new pen. The trouble is there is nothing to write about. I have been racking my brains for a whole hour but I simply can't think of anything to write. It isn't my fault if nothing exciting ever happens, is it?

#### June 3

This morning when I went outside who did I see but Grisha Yakushkin coming down the street.

"Hey, where are you off to?" I asked him.

"I'm going to the Young Naturalists' circle at school."

"Can I come with you?"

"Of course, come along."

On the way we met Yura Kuskov. He was also going to the circle. When everybody had assembled, our teacher Nina Sergeyevna, who leads the circle, took us into the garden and showed us how flowers are made. She told us about the stamens and the yellow dust called pollen which is carried from one flower to another by bees and other insects: the pollen sticks to their feet when they alight on the flower and they fly off with it to the next flower. This is called pollination. The flower that is pollinated bears seed, but if no pollen gets on it

there will be no fruit. That is how insects help to increase the harvest, because if they didn't spread the pollen there would be no seed.

Bees do more to increase the harvest than any other insects because they fly about all day long from flower to flower gathering nectar. That is why there should be as many apiaries as possible.

After the class, Yura called the Pioneer group together and asked us what ideas we had for the summer. No one had anything to suggest. Yura said we would have to put our thinking caps on properly or summer would be over before we thought of anything. He was just about to close the meeting when Grisha Yakushkin said:

"Let's make a beehive and keep bees."

We all thought that a splendid idea.

"Yes, that will do nicely," said Yura. "Bees are very useful. Besides making honey they help to increase the harvest."

"Hurrah!" cried Pavlik Grachyov. "We'll build a beehive in the school garden and start the first school apiary. Our group will get famous!"

"Wait a bit," said Yura. "We don't even know how to make a hive!"

Yura was right. We hadn't the least idea how to begin.

"Let's go and ask Nina Sergeyevna. She ought to know," said Yura.

We ran over to the school and asked Nina Sergeyevna to tell us about beehives. We told her about our plan to keep bees.

"Where will you get the bees?"

"We'll catch them," said Seryozha.

"Catch them? How?"

"With our hands, of course."

Nina Sergeyevna burst out laughing. "If you try to catch your bees one by one they will never stay with you. Bees live in large communities. Your bees will fly away from your hive at the first opportunity and go back to their families."

"What are we to do then?"

"You must get a whole bee family, a swarm it is called."

"Where can we get it?"

"You can order it by mail," Nina Sergeyevna replied.

"By mail?"

"Yes, you must write to some big apiary and ask them to send you a swarm."

"We don't know what apiary to write to."

"I'm afraid I don't know offhand either," said Nina Sergeyevna. "But I shall try to find out for you."

She told us how beehives are made. It's quite simple. All you need is a large wooden box with holes in it. You put the bees inside and they build the hive themselves out of wax and fill it with honey. But they build the cells right against the walls of the box, which makes it hard to get at the honey. So bee-keepers put wooden frames covered with a thin layer of wax into the box. The bees build their own comb on the wax, and when the honey is made the bee-keeper simply removes the frames.

We decided to start building a hive right away. Tolya Pesotsky said we could work in his shed. Yura told us all to bring whatever tools we could get.

When I went home I thought about bees. Imagine being able to get bees by mail! Isn't that interesting?

June 4

This morning we all met at Tolya Pesotsky's shed. Vitya Almazov brought a saw, Grisha Yakushkin had an axe, Yura Kuskov came with a chisel, a pair of pliers and a hammer, Pavlik Grachyov had a plane and a hammer. I had a hammer as well, so that made three.

"Where are we going to get the wood to make it with?" said Seryozha.

We had no boards and we didn't know where to find any.

"That's a good one!" said Yura. "We can't make a hive without boards."

"Oh, there must be some old boards lying about somewhere."

We all went off to hunt for boards. We searched all the sheds and attics, but we couldn't find any.

"Let's go to Galya. She may help us," said Yura.

Galya is our senior Pioneer leader. We went to her and told her our trouble.

"I can ask the Head Master. Perhaps he will let us take some of the boards that were left over after the last repairs."

The Head Master gave us permission to take four large boards. We dragged them over to our shed and got down to work in real earnest, sawing, planing, hammering for all we were worth. Tolya went around shouting and ordering everybody about. He thinks just because it's his shed he can boss the rest of us. I nearly had a row with him. He needed a hammer, so instead of looking for it calmly, he starts yelling:

"Where's the hammer? I had it a minute ago and now it's disappeared."

"It should be here somewhere," said Yura. "I just knocked in a nail."

"Where did you stick it then?"

"I didn't stick it anywhere."

"You'd better look for it."

"Look for it yourself."

He hunted all over but he couldn't find it anywhere.

Everybody stopped working to hunt for the hammer. Finally it turned up—in my hand!

"What are you standing there for like a dummy?" Tolya pounced on me. "Can't you see we're hunting high and low for the hammer?"

"How did I know you were looking for this one? We've got three hammers, haven't we?"

"What's the good of having three when you can't lay your hands on one when you want it."

"Well, you needn't kick up such a row," I said. "I have a right to use the hammer as well as you have. We all want to work."

We didn't finish the hive today because the sun went down and it was too dark to work in the shed after that.



June 5

Hurrah! The hive is ready. There it is—I have drawn a picture of it here in the margin. The thing in the air is the lid. The opening at the bottom of the hive is the "main entrance." The hole on top is another door, a sort of "emergency exit." The little ledge at the bottom is for



the bees to perch on when they fly back to the hive. It is called the alighting-board. The lid is separate so it can be taken off when you have to remove the frames. We also made twelve frames.

Yura went to Nina Sergeyevna to ask about the bees, but she hadn't had time to make any inquiries yet. What if she doesn't manage to find out anything, what shall we do with our hive?



June 6

I went around all day today asking people where to get bees from, but nobody could tell me. I felt pretty blue all morning. When I came home I found Uncle Alyosha there.

"Well, young man," he said. "Why so glum?"

"I want some bees and I don't know where to get them."

"What on earth do you want bees for?"

I told Uncle Alyosha all about our plan to keep bees. "But where are we going to find the bees?"

"Wait a minute," said Uncle Alyosha. "I once knew a bee-keeper back in the village. If I remember right, he used to catch bees with a trap."

"What sort of a trap?"

"It was a plywood box with a hole in it, something like a bird-house. He'd put some honey inside and hang it on a tree in the woods. The smell of the honey attracted the bees and sometimes a whole swarm would settle in the box. Then he'd take the box back home and transfer the bees to a regular hive. You could make a trap like that yourself and when you go to the country with your mother you could put it on a tree in the forest. You may get a swarm that way."

I asked Mother when we would be going to the country.

"Not so soon," she said. "I shan't get my holiday until the end of July, or perhaps August."

I went to Seryozha and told him about the trap.

"Let's make one," he said. "We'll take it to our place in the country. There's a nice forest there and a river too."

"Where is it?"

"In Shishigino, five kilometres from here."

"Could we stay there too?"

"Of course. Nobody lives there but Aunt Polya."

I ran home and asked Mum to let me go and stay at Seryozha's place in the country.

"Don't be silly," said Mother. "How can I let you go to a strange place by yourself?"

"But it's not far. It's only five kilometres. We can walk there."

"No, you can't go," said Mother. "How can you live there all by yourselves?"

"We won't be by ourselves. There's Aunt Polya."

"Aunt Polya! She would never be able to manage you boys."

"But we'd be ever so good, really we would."

"No, no," said Mother. "When I get my holiday we'll go away together. If you go without me you'll get drowned in the river, or lost in the forest, or something. Anything can happen."

I said we wouldn't bathe at all, we wouldn't even go near the river, and we wouldn't walk in the woods either, but Mother wouldn't listen. I begged and pleaded for hours until Mother threatened to tell Dad if I didn't stop. So I stopped. I didn't eat any supper and now I'm going to bed hungry. But I don't care.

## June 7

I got up earlier than usual this morning and started to work on my mother again. She told me to stop it, but I didn't stop, I kept it up until she went to work. Then I went to Seryozha and he said he and Pavlik are going to the country tomorrow, and if I can't get permission to go with them they'll have to go without me. I sat home all day feeling perfectly miserable and as soon as Mother came home from work I went at her again worse than ever. She lost her temper and threatened to complain to Dad about me, but I didn't stop, because I didn't care what happened any more. At last Dad came home.

"Why shouldn't he go?" Dad said when Mother told him. "I think it's a good idea. He's a big lad now. It's time he learned to be a little independent."

Mother said Dad was always interfering and making it impossible to bring up the child (that's me) properly, and Dad said Mum wasn't bringing me up right at all, and they very nearly quarrelled. But they soon made it up and Mother went over to Seryozha's mother and they arranged everything. Seryozha's mother said we wouldn't be in anybody's way, Aunt Polya would look after us and cook our meals.

Mother calmed down after that and said she would let me go for three days and that if I was a good boy she might let me go again. I promised to be as good as anything.

All the boys were excited when they heard we were going to the country to catch bees. Yura gave us his compass so that we wouldn't lose our way in the forest. Tolya gave us a penknife; Fedya brought us a mess-tin in case we wanted to cook a meal over a camp-fire. We found a piece of plywood and made the trap. It came out quite well. We made a hole in front and a little door which could be closed when the bees were inside. We made a lid as well, like the one on the hive, so we could get at the bees.

Mother has bought all sorts of foodstuffs for me to take along—cereals, flour, butter, sugar, bread and tinned food. My knapsack is quite heavy with all that stuff in it. Seryozha's knapsack is as fat as mine. But Pavlik's is the biggest. He has the mess-tin and a water-flask 'and all sorts of stuff. Well, now everything is ready. I am so excited I can hardly wait for tomorrow to start out for Shishigino.

## June 8

Hurrah! We're in Shishigino already. Seryozha's country place turned out to be a little wooden bungalow standing among the trees with not even a fence around it. There is a row of poles stuck in the ground, so I suppose they started making a fence but had no time to finish. The house was locked when we came and no one was about. Aunt Polya has gone off somewhere. We waited and waited and after a while we decided to go to the woods and hang up our trap so as not to waste time. We put some honey inside the box and hung it on a tree. Then we went down to the river to bathe. The water was quite cold, but we had a fine time splashing about. Finally we came out. We were blue with cold and our teeth were chattering and we were as hungry as wolves.

We made a fire on the bank, opened up a tin of meat and cooked it over the fire. It tasted very good. After we had eaten, we went back to the house, but Aunt Polya hadn't come back yet.

"Wouldn't it be wonderful if we came across a tree-hollow full of bees!" said Pavlik. "We could get a whole swarm right off."

"Yes, but how are we to find a hollow like that?"

"Let's watch some bee and see where it goes," said Pavlik. "When it gathers the nectar it will fly back to the hive, and we'll run after it and see where the swarm lives."

We saw a bee alight on a flower and we stopped to watch it. It flew from one flower to another and we crawled along after it on all fours, never letting it out of our sight.

I was soon aching all over from crawling—my arms ached and my legs and my back, but the bee kept on sucking nectar and didn't have the slightest intention of flying back to the hive.

Finally Seryozha said: "I suppose bees go back to the hive much later in the day. Let's go and have another swim. We've got plenty of time to chase bees."

We went down to the river again and had another swim. We stayed in the water until the sun went down. Then we dressed and went back to the house, but Aunt Polya hadn't come yet.

"Perhaps she has gone to town and won't be back tonight?" I said.

"Don't be silly, she must come back," said Seryozha. "Where can she be?"

"But suppose she doesn't? We'd better be going home."

"I'm not going anywhere," said Pavlik. "I'm much too tired."

"Where are we going to sleep?"



"We can ask the neighbours to take us in for the night," said Seryozha.

"No, don't let's do that," said Pavlik. "Let's make a little tent of branches and sleep out in the open."

"That's a great idea!" said Seryozha. "It will be fun sleeping in a tent. I've never done it before. But how do you make one?"

Pavlik knew how and we set to work at once. We broke off some branches, and Pavlik found four long sticks and stood them up at a slant like a pyramid and piled the branches all around them. Then we gathered a lot of dry moss and spread it on the floor of the tent to lie on, with our knapsacks for pillows. It is very cosy inside, although just a wee bit crowded.

We have decided not to go anywhere else because we are terribly tired. And no wonder. Think of all 'the walking we have done today—we came all the way from town, then we walked in the woods walked down to the river, walked back to the house again, then back to the woods, down to the river again and back to the house. We have done more walking in one day than a normal person does in a month. And we built the tent besides.

Now we are sitting on the steps of the house, resting. I am writing in my diary with my fountain-pen and Seryozha and Pavlik are admiring the view. It is a lovely, quiet evening. There is no wind. The trees are quite still. Only the aspen leaves are shivering a little. They look as if they were made of silver. The sky is clear and the big red sun is sinking behind the forest. The collective-farm cattle is being driven home. The cows shuffle along lazily. There are about fifty of them—black, brown, reddish, spotted, piebald and some even pinkish. Now the sun is half hidden. In a few minutes we shall crawl in side our tent and go to sleep. It is not dark yet, but it soon will be. There's no sense in sitting up in the dark when we have a nice comfy place to sleep in.

June 9

We didn't get much sleep last night. Here's what happened. Pavlik, being a sly one, crawled into the tent first and took a place in the centre, leaving Seryozha and me on the outside. Seryozha went to sleep right away, but I couldn't fall asleep for anything. At first I felt very comfortable, so comfortable in fact that I began to wonder why people went to the trouble of making beds with mattresses and

pillows and such things when you could get along quite well without them. After a while the back of my head began to ache. I tried to imagine what was in the knapsack that could be so hard—the macaroni or the cereals. I poked the knapsack in the dark and found I'd been lying on the mess-tin.

"I must have got hold of Pavlik's knapsack by mistake," I thought and I turned it over on the other side. But there was a can of some kind on that side too. I turned the knapsack this way and that, trying to find something softer to lie on, a roll perhaps.

"What are you looking for?" Pavlik asked.

"A roll."

"What! Hungry already?"

"Don't be an ass."

"Well, what do you want a roll for?"

"To sleep on. This knapsack is hard."

"Softie!" Pavlik sneered.

"You try sleeping on a tin can and see how you like it," I retorted.

I didn't find the roll but I finally got some paper bag—the sugar, most likely—under my head and was just settling down to sleep when my back started to ache. From lying too long in one position, I suppose. I turned over on my side.

"Stop wriggling like an eel on a frying-pan!" grumbled Pavlik.

"Why can't I wriggle if I want to?"

"Because you keep pushing me, that's why!"

"Softie! Can't stand being pushed."

Pretty soon my side began to ache too. I stood it for quite a long time and tried hard to fall asleep. But it was no use. I turned over on my stomach.

"Keep still, can't you!" hissed Pavlik. "How can anyone sleep with you tossing about like that?"

"Sh, you'll be asleep in a jiffy," I said, but the words were hardly out of my mouth when the whole tent collapsed on top of us. I had accidentally kicked one of the poles out of place.

"Clumsy ass!" shouted Pavlik. "Now you've gone-and done it!"

Seryozha stuck his head out from among the branches, blinking sleepily.

"What kind of a joke is this?" he growled.

"It's this clumsy elephant here," Pavlik told him. "Come on, get up and help put it up again."

We crawled out from under the ruins and started rebuilding our shelter. It was still light enough to see and we managed to finish before it got quite dark. This time I took care to dive inside first and occupy the middle place before the others got in.

"Hey, that's my place!" Pavlik objected.

"This isn't a theatre," I said. "The seats aren't numbered."

He tried to push me away, but I wouldn't budge. So he lay down on the edge, snorting in disgust. I noticed he didn't seem very comfortable either, because he turned over several times. I couldn't fall asleep myself for quite a long time either, but finally I dozed off. I don't know how long I slept, I can't even remember dreaming anything, but a terrific whack on the head woke me up. At first I couldn't make out what had happened or where I was, but then I saw that the tent had collapsed again and one of the poles had fallen right on my head. It was pitch dark. The sky was black except for the stars twinkling faintly a long way off. We crawled out again.

"Got to put it up again, I suppose," yawned Seryozha.

"How can we put it up in the dark?"

"Well, we can try. Can't very well, sleep out in the open."

We groped about among the heap of branches, looking for the poles. We found three straightaway but the fourth was missing. We hunted all over for it, but when at last we found it we lost the other three. We groped around some more and finally located them all. We were just about to set them up when Pavlik said;

"Wait a minute, where's our camp?"

"What camp?"

"The place where we left our knapsacks and things."

We started wandering about in the dark in search of our knapsacks, but they had disappeared. We gave up hunting for them and decided to build our shelter in a different place. While Pavlik knocked in the poles, Seryozha and I gathered branches.

"Come here quick!" Seryozha shouted suddenly. "I've found a whole pile of branches over here."

I went over to him and sure enough there was a heap of branches lying on the ground. We picked up as many as we could carry and took them over to Pavlik. When we came back for the next batch Seryozha said:

"Just a minute, there's something else lying here."

"Where?"

"Here under the branches. A bag of some kind."

I bent down and my hand touched a bag in the dark.

"So there is," I said. "And it's full too. Look, there's another one next to it."

"Fancy that!" said Seryozha. "Two bags!"

"Oh look, here's another!" I said.

"Three bags!" cried Seryozha. "Who could have left them here?"

"Fat-head," I said. "They're ours."

"Ours?"

"Of course. They're our knapsacks."

"So they are! Who would have thought of looking for them over here."

We called Pavlik over and showed him our discovery. We picked up the knapsacks and carried them over to the new shelter. I walked ahead so as to dive in first, but I couldn't find the entrance. I walked round and round, but it was closed on all sides.

"Hey, where's the entrance?" I asked.

"Dash it all," said Pavlik. "I forgot to leave an opening."

He carefully removed some of the branches, and as soon as he had a space big enough he dived inside and lay down in the centre. I was too tired to argue with him, so I followed Seryozha's example and lay down at the side without a word. There was something hard under my head again—the mess-tin or some other can—but I was so tired I fell asleep right away. Well, that's the story.

Now it is morning. I woke up earlier than the others to write my diary. The sun is up and it is already quite hot. Fuzzy white clouds are floating in the sky and I can hear cows lowing and dogs barking over in the village. Seryozha and Pavlik are still fast asleep inside the tent. I'm going to wake them up in a minute and we'll start break fast going. I'm famished.

### Evening of the Same Day

After breakfast we went to the woods to inspect our trap. It was empty, so we decided to try chasing the bees again and we spent the next couple of hours crawling after them. Finally Pavlik lost patience. He tried frightening the bee so as to make it fly back to its hive. He started shouting at it and swinging his arms and stamping his feet. The bee buzzed angrily over his head and suddenly he let out a terrific



yell. The bee had stung him! His ear turned red and started swelling at once.

Pavlik was furious. "Damn those bees! I've had enough of them. You can fuss with them if you like. Oh, how my ear smarts."

"Never mind," we told him. "It'll stop hurting soon."

"It's all right for you to talk," he cried. "You don't know what it's like. Oh dear, what shall I do?"

"Perhaps we ought to bandage it with a handkerchief?" I suggested.

"No," said Pavlik. "I'll go down to the river and bathe it."

He went down to bathe his ear and Seryozha and I kept up the bee-hunt. We took turns: while one watched, the other rested. We waited and waited and suddenly the bee we were watching rose up and flew away. We rushed after it but it flew so high that we lost sight of it.

"What a shame!" said Seryozha. "Now we'll have to start all over again."

Just then Pavlik came running up from the river, carrying something in his cap.

"Look what I've got!" he shouted. We ran over and looked into his cap. It was full of little live carp fish.

"Where did you find them?"

"In the bog near the river."

"How did you catch them without a rod or anything?"

"There's hardly any water in that spot. I just picked them out with my bare hands. Come on, let's make some fish soup."

We ran down to the bog and caught some more fish and cooked a delicious soup. Then we went down and caught some more fish for supper.

"There's heaps of them here," said Pavlik. "We can have fish for dinner every day."

After dinner we went back to the forest to chase bees.

"Suppose we try sprinkling some water on them. They will think it's raining and fly back to their hive."

We filled the mess-tin with water and sprinkled some of it on the first bee we saw. It crawled down the stalk of the flower and hid under a green leaf. It must have been waiting for the rain to stop because presently it came out and sat drying itself in the sun. When it was dry, it spread its wings and flew away. We were just going to run after it when it alighted on a flower and started gathering nectar again. Seryozha took a mouthful of water and spurted it over the bee. But the

bee didn't fly home. It waited until it was dry and then went on flying from flower to flower again.

"What a stubborn bee!" said Seryozha and he sprayed it again. This time the poor thing was soaked through. Even its wings shrivelled up and stuck to its back.

When the bee saw that the "rain" showed no signs of stopping, it flew away as soon as its wings had dried. We ran after it. At first it flew close to the ground, between the tree-trunks, but then it soared up and we lost sight of it. After that we tried spraying other bees, but they all acted the same way: at first they hid under a leaf, then came out to dry up in the sun, and after that they flew away and we couldn't follow a single one because they flew too high and too fast. We kept up our bee-hunt until the bees had all gone and the sun was going too. We went back to our camp and cooked our supper.



Aunt Polya has not come back yet for some reason and we have decided to spend another night in our shelter. I think we really ought to go back home, but Seryozha and Pavlik say one more night won't matter because we will be going home tomorrow in any case. This time we have decided to fix our shelter so it won't fall down on us in the night. Seryozha and Pavlik are busy right now, knocking the poles deeper into the ground, while I am writing down our adventures in my diary. The sky is covered with dark-grey clouds. The air is cooler than it was and the wind has risen. What if it rains during the night? We must cover our shelter with plenty of branches to keep the rain out. I'd better stop writing and go and help Seryozha and Pavlik.

June 10

We had no adventures last night. That's because we built our shelter properly. It always pays to build properly; then you can go to sleep without being afraid that the roof will come tumbling down on your head. It didn't rain either. I woke up early. The birds woke me. It was hardly light when they started twittering and chirruping for all they were worth. I crawled out of the tent and saw that the sun wasn't up yet. The sky was a clear pale blue and white clouds, as soft and fluffy as soapsuds, were floating low over the ground. Gradually they grew bigger and rose up like steam higher and higher until they had covered the whole sky. After a while they turned a bright pink, the colour of strawberry ice-cream. I wondered what it would be like to have that much ice-cream; would we be able to eat it all? There would be enough to last us all our lives and some left over. I don't think all the people in the world could eat up so much ice-cream. While I was thinking these thoughts I saw a huge red sun rise up from the earth. At once everything began to sparkle and glow. The green grass looked greener and every blade of grass had tiny drops of dew on it that sparkled like diamonds. I woke Seryozha and Pavlik to see the beautiful sight, but before they had finished rubbing their eyes the dew had gone and there was nothing exciting to look at.

"You sleepy-heads," I said. "Snoozing like a couple of dormice in their burrow! You'll never see anything if you don't get up early."

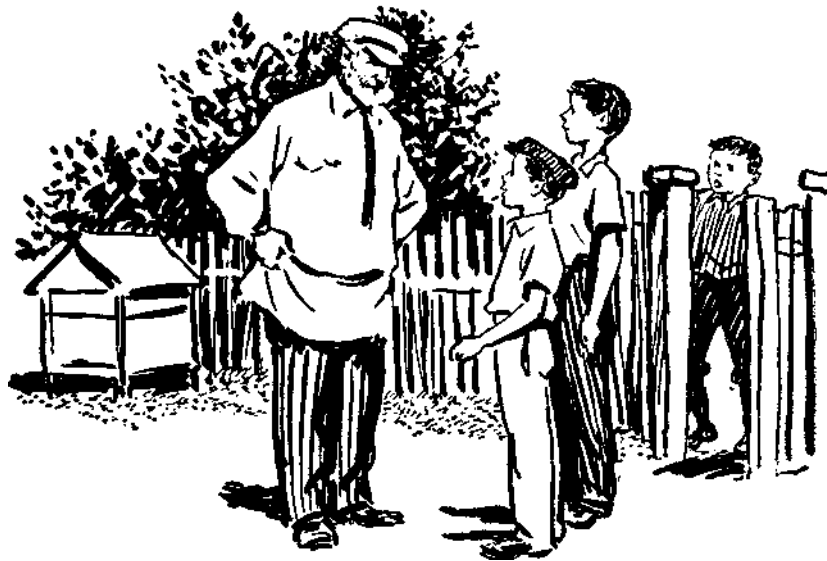
Pavlik yawned and stretched and set to work to clean the fish for breakfast, but Seryozha said we ought to wash first. So we all trooped down to the river and had a dip. Then we went back to make breakfast. We fried the fish. We found some flour in one of the knapsacks and Pavlik made some pancakes. They weren't very good but they gave me a good idea.

"Let's try sprinkling some flour on the bees," I suggested. "That will make them heavy and they won't be able to fly so fast."

The others agreed and we sprinkled a little flour on the first bee we came across. The bee began cleaning itself at once with its feet. In a minute it had shaken off all the flour and was busy sucking nectar again.

"I know what," said Seryozha. "We ought to wet it a little first and then the flour will stick to it and the bee won't be able to brush it off so easily."

We tried that too. Seryozha took a mouthful of water and spurted it neatly on the bee and Pavlik sprinkled it with flour. The bee with flour sticking all over it began to clean itself. It rubbed its head and eyes with its front legs and its tummy and wings with its hind legs. It worked very hard until it was all clean (except for a little patch of wet flour on its back. We were just about to give it another dose when it spread its wings and flew off. We dashed after it. At first it flew slowly, but then it went faster and was soon out of the woods and heading across the field. We ran after it like mad, jumping over hummocks and tree-stumps, across ditches and hollows. We followed it over a cabbage patch and suddenly came smack up against a fence. The bee flew straight over the fence and disappeared. We vaulted over the fence after it and found ourselves in a garden. Imagine our surprise when we saw a row of beehives exactly like the one we had made. Beside one of the hives stood an old man with a white beard, staring at us in surprise.



"Well, and what have you to say for yourselves?" he asked sternly as we stood there like dummies with our eyes goggling.

"Er . . . nothing," stammered Pavlik and climbed back over the fence.

"Why must you climb over the fence? There's a gate!" said the old man, shaking his head reproachfully.

". . . I didn't notice the gate," said Pavlik and disappeared.

Seryozha and I were left with the old man. I was wondering which way to escape when the old man said:

"What are you young rascals doing here?"

"We... er ... we made a mistake, " I said.

"Our bee flew into your garden, and we were following it," Seryozha explained.

"Your bee?" The old man looked surprised. "Impossible! It must be my bee."

Then we noticed that the garden was full of bees. They were flying about all over the place and the air was filled with their buzzing.

"Why were you chasing the bee?" the old man asked.

We said we thought it would lead us to a tree-hollow with wild bees.

"But what do you want with bees?"

We explained that our Pioneer group had decided to go in for bee-keeping. Pavlik, who had been listening behind the fence, saw that the old man wasn't scolding us and came over to us. We told the old man about the bee-trap we had hung in the woods. He seemed quite interested.

"It is a fine thing to keep bees," he said. "A very useful occupation. But it is not easy to catch wild bees. Besides, there aren't any in these parts. The only bees you might catch with your trap are those that may stray away from the hive."

"But what are we to do?" we asked.

"I shall give you a few to start with," the old man said, "I see you really want to keep bees. Bee-keepers must help one another."

My heart leapt with joy. I thought the old man would give us the bees on the spot, but he said:

"Come back here toward evening. I have a swarm that is ready to leave the hive. I can let you have it. But you had better bring some sort of a box to put them in."

"Will our trap do?" I asked.

"Yes, that will be fine. Come back in three or four hours when it is a little cooler."

We ran back to the woods and took down our trap and now we are waiting to go to the old man. So while we wait I thought I'd write it all down in my diary. I've noticed the time goes quicker when you write. We haven't very long to wait now. I do hope the swarm will be there. That's all for just now.

Later

We have our bees at last! The old man was awfully kind. I thought all bee-keepers were cross because they get stung so often, but this one wasn't the least bit cross. He was very nice and friendly. And he kept his promise. When we came back to his garden he had the swarm ready for us in a round wooden box like a large sieve covered with a piece of cheese-cloth. Goodness, what a lot of bees there were! The box was positively thick with them. The old man took off the cheese-cloth and spilled the bees into our trap, just as if they were a bag of peas or something. We closed the trap quickly and thanked the old man. Before we left he gave us all sorts of instructions about handling bees.

He told us to empty the bees straight on to the waxed frames of the hive. For the beginning we would have to provide syrup for the bees to feed on while they gathered the nectar. To make the syrup you melt down sugar and pour it into a small glass jar, tie a piece of cloth over the neck of the jar and put it inside the hive upside down. The syrup will seep out slowly and the bees suck at it through the cloth. The old man also taught us how to make nets out of cheese-cloth to put on our heads when we opened the hive, and how to make a smoke-pot to drive the bees back into the hive. He showed us his smoke-pot—it was a round iron bowl with a spout and a bellows attached. You fill it with bits of rotten wood and set them alight, and when you press the bellows the smoke comes out of the spout.

"Bees are fascinating little creatures," said the old man. "Anyone who goes in for bee-keeping will love bees all his life and never give them up."

"Why?"

"He'd be lonely without them."

At last we said good-bye and set out for home. It was quite late before we reached town. Seryozha took the bees to his place and Pavlik and I ran home to tell our people we were back. In a little while we were at Seryozha's place.

Seryozha's mother asked us how we had got along in the country. We were afraid she would ask us about Aunt Polyá because we didn't know what she would say if she knew we'd been living in a shelter made of tree branches. Seryozha quickly began to talk about the old man who kept bees. His mother listened with interest to his story.

"And how is Aunt Polyá?" she asked.

Before we had time to answer someone knocked at the door. It was Pavlik's mother. She had come to call Pavlik to supper. We sighed with relief and showed her the bees and told her all about the old bee-keeper. Then Seryozha's mother said again:

"But why don't you tell us anything about Aunt Polya?"

We didn't know what to say but luckily my mother came in at that moment. We showed her the bees and told her all about the old man who had given them to us. My mother also asked us how we had got along in the country. "Oh, we got along fine."

"I hope you didn't give Aunt Polya too much trouble."

"I don't think so," I said, not sure whether that could be called a fib or not.

"Is Aunt Polya going to visit us soon?" Seryozha's mother wanted to know.

"N-no, at least I don't think so," answered Seryozha.

"Didn't she say anything about it?"

"No, she didn't."

That was the truth, at any rate. I don't know how that conversation would have ended but just then there was another knock at the door and we sighed with relief again. But not for long. The door opened and who should walk in but Aunt Polya herself! We simply gaped.

"Good evening!" said Aunt Polya.

"Good evening," said Seryozha's mother. "We were just talking about you and wondering when you'd be coming to see us."

"There was a lorry going to town from the farm, so I took the opportunity to come and see you."

Then she turned to Seryozha and said:

"Hallo, Seryozha! I haven't seen you for a long time."

Seryozha turned as red as a beet-root.

"How's that?" says Seryozha's mother. "Didn't you see him today?"

Aunt Polya looked surprised.

"Where could I have seen him?"

"Why, in Shishigino, of course."

"But I haven't been there for three days. I've been working on the farm in Tarasovka."

It was out at last!

"Now then, where have you been?" Seryozha's mother asked us sternly.

"In . . . Shishigino," stammered Seryozha.

"But the house was locked up."

"I know it was."

"Where did you sleep?"

"We made a shelter of tree branches."

Well, there was a fuss! They all started talking at once—my mother, Pavlik's mother and Seryozha's mother. I don't know what happened after that because my mother took me home. She was very angry with me and scolded me all the way home.

"You're a very naughty boy. I'll teach you to sleep out under the trees for two nights without my permission! That's the last time I let you go off anywhere without me."

I had to stay home and listen to that sort of thing all evening. And I was simply dying to go and look at the bees.

June 11

An awful thing happened today.

I went over to Pavlik's place in the morning and we both went to Seryozha. He was still in bed. We woke him up. He wasn't at all pleased to see us. He said he had been in the middle of a wonderful dream.

"Never mind," we said, "you'll dream the rest of it tonight. We've got to put the bees into the hive."

"You go and tell the others about the bees while I'm getting dressed."

"Where's the trap?" we asked him.

"On the balcony. I put it there last night so the bees should have plenty of fresh air."

We went on to the balcony. The trap was there, but the little door was wide open and the bees were flying around all over the place.

"Oh you—idiot!" Pavlik yelled at him. "The bees have all flown away while you snoozed."

Seryozha came running out on to the balcony.

"Don't stand there gaping," he shouted. "Close the door."

"What are you shouting at us for?" says Pavlik. "We're not to blame. You're the one who left the trap open."

"I don't know how I could have forgotten to shut it," he said.

"Fat-head!" I said in disgust.

"It isn't my fault. It's all Aunt Polya. I got such a scolding I forgot all about the bees."



"I bet there aren't any left now," said Pavlik. "They've all flown away most likely."

"Perhaps there are a few left," said Seryozha. "Let's look."

I opened the lid and we all looked in. There were still quite a lot of bees inside. They flew up as soon as the lid was off. Pavlik waved his hand at them to make them go back and one of them flew out and settled on my hand. I dropped the lid in fright and tried to shake off the bee and it stung me. I yelled and slapped it dead. At that the other bees started buzzing furiously; they flew out of the trap and attacked us. Pavlik ran back into the room. Seryozha ran after him. One bee stung me in the neck, another got tangled in my hair. I ran into the room, pulling at my hair to get the bee out, but it stung my head. Pavlik was stung in the neck and on the lip. Seryozha had a sting on his nose and on the back of his neck.

We ran into the kitchen to bathe our wounds. They burned like fire. We helped one another pull the stings out but the pain didn't go away.

"It's all your fault!" cried Seryozha. "You shouldn't have waved your arms about. Bees don't like when people wave their hands."



"Don't you shout at me!" said Pavlik. "You're not the only one who got stung. Look at this one I got on my lip. It hurts dreadfully."

"What about my nose! You think that doesn't hurt!"

"You don't do anything with your nose. But I have to talk with my mouth."

"You can keep quiet for a change."

They glared at each other speechless with anger.

We sat for a long time in the kitchen, wetting our handkerchiefs under the tap and dabbing our wounds.

Suddenly Seryozha jumped up with a horrified look on his face.

"Oh dear, we left the trap open!"

We ran back into the room and looked out on to the balcony. The trap stood there with the lid off. One or two bees were circling over it

but they soon flew off. We went on to the balcony and looked into the trap. It was empty.

"They've all gone!" wailed Seryozha.

"Maybe they'll come back again," I said.

"Fat chance!" said Pavlik.

Just then we saw Tolya and Yura down in the street. They noticed us and shouted:

"Hey there! So you're back!"

"Yes, we're back."

"Have you brought the bees?"

"Yes."

In a few minutes they were in the house.

"Well, where are the bees?"

"They've gone," we said. "Flown away."

"Where to?"

"Where to!" Pavlik mocked angrily. "They forgot to tell us."

"What are you so sore about? You don't need to snap at us."

We told them the whole story—how the old man had given us the bees and how the bees had flown away.

"Perhaps the old man would give us another swarm?" said Yura.

"Oh no, we couldn't ask him again. He thought we would take care of them. He wouldn't give us any more if he knew how careless we'd been."

"What are we going to do?"

"We'll have to wait. Perhaps they'll come back."

So we waited. Yura and Tolya sat with us for a while, but then they got tired and went away to tell the others what had happened.

Pretty soon the other fellows began coming one after another and we had to tell the story all over again. We were soon fed up with the whole business. Seryozha's nose was all red and swollen on one side. Pavlik's lip was so big you could hardly recognize him. And I had a big lump on my head and another on my neck. We waited until dinner-time but not a single bee came back.

"They must have flown back to the old man's garden," said Seryozha.

"Let them!" said Pavlik. "I don't care. Even if they do come back I shan't bother with them any more."

"Neither shall I," said Seryozha. "I don't like being stung."

I said: "I don't think much of bee-keeping either. You go to a lot of trouble to make the bees comfortable and they go and sting you and then fly away."

Just then Yura came in. "Come on," he said, "we're going to write a letter."

"To whom?"

"To the apiary. Nina Sergeyevna brought us the address. We'll write and ask them to send us some bees in a parcel."

"You can write yourselves," Pavlik said. "We're not interested in bees any more."

"Not interested?"

"No, we don't want to bother with them. We've decided to give up the whole business."

"You can't do that," said Yura. "It is the decision of the Pioneer group."

"We'll find some other work to do. Bee-keeping isn't the only work there is in the world, is it?"

Yura tried to persuade us but we stuck firm to our decision. We aren't going to have anything more to do with bees and that is final.

We've learned our lesson. Let someone else fuss with bees, we'll find something less painful to do.

June 12

I could hardly get up this morning. My neck is all swollen and it hurts so badly I can't turn my head. If I need to look to the right or left I have to turn my whole body. The bump on top of my head hurts too. So does my hand.

I went over to Pavlik's. He was at home with a compress on his neck. We didn't half curse those bees! Then Seryozha came with a swollen nose and he also cursed the bees.

.After a while Grisha Yakushkin came in.

"Aren't you coming to help with the bee-keeping equipment?"

"What are you making?"

"A smoke-pot and nets to wear over our heads so the bees won't sting us when we work with them."

"They may sting you, but they won't sting us, because we're not going to have anything to do with them."

Grisha tried to argue with us.

"Nothing doing," we said. "We've had enough of bee-keeping. We tried it. Now you have a shot at it."

"That's what we're going to do."

"You'll drop it soon enough."

"No, we won't. We're not like you."

"Well, we'll see." . Grisha went off in a huff.

Let him go if he likes. Wait till they all get stung, they'll sing another tune then.

### June 13

My neck doesn't hurt so much today. I can turn my head if I do it slowly. It still hurts when I turn it quickly. Pavlik's neck is also better, but not quite.

Grisha came and showed us the smoke-pot they made. He smoked up the whole room and went away. As if we never saw smoke before!

### June 14

My neck has stopped aching altogether. The bump on my head is gone too. I can turn my head without any difficulty. I can even toss it and it doesn't hurt. But since I'm not a horse there's no need for me to toss my head. Nothing else interesting to write about.

### June 15

This morning Pavlik and I went to Seryozha's place and played draughts. I won two games from Seryozha and one game from Pavlik, Pavlik won three games from me and none from Seryozha, and Seryozha won two games from me. After that Zhenya and Yura came running in.

"Come quickly! The bees have arrived!"

"What bees?"

"The ones we sent for. They came by parcel post. A whole box of them. Heaps and heaps of bees. And two frames with ready-made combs. Come along. We're going to put them in the hive."

We jumped up, all ready to go.

"Aha!" gloated Yura. "You said you weren't interested in bees any more!"

"Neither we are," we said, sitting down again. "As if we'd never seen bees before."

"Not like these. They're awfully nice bees!"

"All right, go ahead and kiss them if they're so nice!"

"So we will. And you will too, I bet."

They went out.

"It would be interesting to take a look at those bees," I said.

"We can't go," said Pavlik. "They'll all say we haven't any backbone."

"Why?"

"They'll say we dropped bee-keeping because we were afraid of difficulties, but we don't mind coming around so long as the others do the work. No, once we've made a decision we've got to stick to it."

"That's right," said Seryozha. "We'll show them how firm we can be."

I thought about bees all evening. I don't think bees are so bad, after all. They're fine, hard-working insects and they live very peace fully together. You never see two bees fighting, for instance.

## June 16

This morning we played draughts again at Pavlik's place. But after a while I got tired of playing draughts and went home. I kept thinking about bees. Why do they sting? Is it because they are just naturally nasty or is there some other reason? I don't think it is because they are nasty. They defend themselves against enemies with their stings. If anyone attacks the hive the bees sting them. I've heard they even sting bears that come and try to steal their honey. And they're quite right. After all, they work hard storing up the honey for themselves and not for the bears. They sting people by mistake, I suppose, because they don't know that people aren't going to harm them. True, people take their honey away, but they don't take it all. They only take as much as they need and they look after the bees and make hives for them and keep them warm and comfortable in the winter time. It would be much worse for the bees if people didn't take care of them. They would live in tree-hollows or some other holes instead of in nice roomy hives where they get syrup to eat when there is no honey.

If you don't want to be stung you can always wear a net and use smoke to keep the bees under control. And then everything will be all right.

We made the mistake of sticking our heads right into the trap without nets on them and we were punished.

June 17

Pavlik made paper birds today and flew them about the room. Seryozha made one and dropped it off the balcony into the street. It whirled about in the air, turned a somersault and fell right in the middle of the road. After that we all started dropping them from the balcony. One of mine flew right across the street and fell on the roof of the house opposite. One of Seryozha's fell on a car that was going down the street and went off with the car. After a while I got tired of flying paper birds and went home, feeling in the dumps for some reason. And now too I feel down in the dumps and I can't think of anything to do.

June 18

We made paper birds again today and flew them from the balcony. But we soon got tired of that, so we began playing draughts, but got tired of that too. We played all sorts of other games, but we didn't get much fun out of it.

Presently Seryozha said he was fed up and went home. I didn't feel much like playing either and I went home too, feeling as down in the mouth as yesterday. I don't understand why I feel like this. Is it because I'm bored? I don't think so. When you're bored you can always play a game and you stop being bored, but when you're in the dumps you don't even want to play games.

If you ask me it comes from having nothing to do. When you're busy doing something useful you never feel blue. But when you twiddle your thumbs all day or fritter away your time with all sorts of silly nonsense you feel ashamed of yourself for wasting time and that's what puts you in the dumps.

June 19

Pavlik was out of sorts all morning and didn't want to play any games. After dinner he went off somewhere. Seryozha and I searched all over for him. We looked into all the sheds and attics but we couldn't find him. We thought he must have gone to see one of the

boys, so we stopped looking for him. We didn't feel so gay ourselves either.

"If we were taking care of the bees with the others we wouldn't feel like this," said Seryozha.

"I say, let's go over and have a look at the bees while Pavlik's away," I suggested.



Seryozha brightened up. "Let's go right away before he gets back, or he'll say we haven't any backbone."

We hurried over to the school. We saw the hive in the distance as soon as we entered the garden. Someone was sitting beside it staring at the bees. It was Pavlik.

"So here you are!" we cried. "What's happened to your famous backbone? You told us we weren't to show any interest in the bees and here you go and sneak off to look at them by yourself. Is that a comradely thing to do?"

Pavlik looked guilty.

"I ... I just dropped in by chance," he said. "I was walking past, so I thought I'd come in."

"Rats!" we said. "You just wanted to have a look at the bees."

"Honest, I didn't. What do I want to look at them for?"

"But you did come to look at them, didn't you?"

"What about yourselves?"

"We also just dropped in by chance. We were passing by and saw you sitting here, so we came to look at you."

"That's not true. You just didn't have enough backbone to stick it out, that's all."

"You needn't talk. You came here before we did."



We argued about it for a long time. We were so hard at it that we didn't hear Yura coming up. He had overheard our talk and he said:

"None of you has any backbone."

"Why?"

"Because you started to work and dropped it. If you had any backbone you wouldn't have given up no matter how difficult it was."

"We didn't give up anything," said Pavlik. "We just wanted a little rest. We're quite ready to start working again now."

"That's fine," said Yura. "You go home and make yourselves nets and come and join us. But you'd better buzz off now or you'll get stung."

"We'll sit for a while and then we'll go," said Pavlik.

We sat down quietly near the hive and watched the bees crawling out one after the other and flying off for nectar. Some of the bees flew in, perched on the alighting-board and crawled inside. There were bees hovering around the hive all the time.

It was nice to see our hive alive with bees. We got quite a thrill watching them. After a while we went home and made ourselves nets out of wire and cheese-cloth. That kept us busy until evening. Our nets came out very well indeed. And we forgot all about being bored.

## June 20

Today has been a wonderful day! Our whole group met in the school garden first thing in the morning. Everyone brought nets and Yura brought the smoke-pot. We began by testing the smoke-pot. We gathered pieces of dried wood and put them in the pot. Yura set them alight and blew on them. It worked beautifully.

Then we opened the hive and looked in. It was seething with bees! The frames were black with them. Some of them tried to come out when we opened the lid but Yura blew some smoke at them and they crawled back. Then Tolya took out one of the frames and we had our first glimpse of a honeycomb. It is made of little six-sided compartments built closely together and called .cells. The bees were so busy working at it that we put the frame back quickly so as not to disturb them.

Bees are wonderful insects. The honeycombs they make are so beautiful and neat that it is hard to believe they can have been built by such tiny creatures. Animals are clever too, take dogs, for instance. But even the cleverest dog couldn't make a honeycomb.

June 21

Today Galya brought her camera and took a snap-shot of our group beside the beehive. The boys stood in a row at the back of the hive but there was no room for Seryozha, Pavlik and me, so we sat in front. Galya told us all to stand still and then she clicked the camera and the picture was taken. Wonderful thing photography! Snap! And you are on the film. I once saw a film being developed. They put it into some liquid and they shake it and shake it and for a while nothing happens, then all of a sudden the picture appears. Only everything is the other way around because that's the way it comes out on the film, but when the picture is printed it comes straight again.

I wonder how our photo will come out. I'm afraid I'll come out with my eyes shut, because I blinked just when Galya clicked the camera. I've had that happen to me before. When we had our class photograph taken I blinked at the wrong moment and came out on the photo with my eyes closed as if I was sleeping on my feet. The boys didn't half rag me about it, they said I had spoiled the whole photo graph. As if it was my fault!

June 22

The photo isn't ready yet. What a shame! Galya says the film hasn't dried yet. We asked her whether it had come out all right, but she wouldn't say.

"I'll print it tomorrow and then you'll see."

I am all excited. I do hope I won't come out blind like last time. What the dickens did I have to go and blink for just at the wrong moment!

Oh dear, I can hardly wait for tomorrow.

June 23

Galya brought the photo. Everyone came out fine except me—my mouth is wide open. I can't understand how it happened, because I don't remember opening my mouth at all. Everything else is all right, my eyes are open as they should be, but so is my mouth and that ought to have been shut. Of course I've had to listen to all sorts of nasty remarks from the fellows again:

"What did you have to go and gape for?"

"I didn't mean it."

"You ought to have stuck your tongue out while you were about it."

"It's none of your business what I look like. You came out all right, didn't you?"

"Yes, we're all right, but look at you!"

"What about me?"

"Sitting there gaping like a fish!"

I asked Galya whether she couldn't do something to cover up my mouth.

"But why?" she said. "I think you came out very well. It's a very good likeness."

"You mean to say I look like that? I'm supposed to be good-looking."

"So you are."

"Yes, but the photo makes me look silly."

"Nothing of the kind. Your mouth is slightly open because you are smiling, that's all. Nothing wrong with it. You don't look silly at all. On the contrary, you look very intelligent."

I am sure she was only trying to console me. But perhaps I really do look intelligent? I don't know. I only know that I always look funny on photographs. I don't know how it happens, because actually I am rather handsome, but you wouldn't think so by looking at my photo. Take this photo, for instance. I won't discuss my mouth, because that was my fault after all, but look at that nose. It's a regular pug nose, not a bit like mine. And the ears? Do my ears stick out like samovar handles? Well, I suppose it doesn't matter so much. There is some likeness. You can tell it's me, and not somebody else, so that's something. The main thing is the hive, with me and Seryozha and Pavlik sitting right in front. Very effective.

On the way home Seryozha said:

"Whatever made us push ourselves up to the front like that? Anyone would think we were the chief bee-keepers."

"Yes," said Pavlik, "it doesn't look very nice, especially after we dropped the whole thing and came in at the end. Everyone will think we're trying to take all the credit. They'll say we're conceited."

When I got home I thought about conceit. What makes people conceited? Some people, for instance, think they are wonderful and they're always boasting about themselves. But if you are really good, you don't need to talk about it, because anyone can see that you are good, and if you aren't, no amount of bragging will help, because no

one will believe you. Then there are people who imagine that they're handsome and they strut about giving themselves airs. But everyone can see whether a person is handsome or not, so why boast about it? Some folks think that they are very clever and they brag about it instead of leaving it to other people to judge whether they are clever or not. In my opinion it is very silly to be conceited. It's only silly people who think they're better than everybody else because clever people know that they aren't the only clever ones in the world.

June 24

Today Nina Sergeyevna told us how to water the bees. You take a tank, fill it with water, place a board slantwise under the tap and let the water drip slowly down the board so the bees can drink without being washed away.

We didn't know where to get a tank, but Grisha said there was an old barrel standing in his attic, so we went to his place and his mother said we could take the barrel. It was awfully heavy and we had a hard time hauling it down from the attic. As we were rolling it along the street we met Fedya.

"Where the dickens are you going with that? To the brewery?" "No, to the apiary. It's to water the bees with." "You're crazy! What do they need all that water for?" "That's all right," said Yura. "They'll drink it up." We rolled the barrel into the school garden and got busy filling it with water. But the barrel was so dry that the water poured out of it like from a sieve. We thought we would have to take it back again, but Galya said that when it got properly soaked with water the staves would swell and it would stop leaking.

So we went on hauling water. We must have poured a couple of hundred pails into that barrel before it finally stopped leaking. Gradually it swelled and by evening we had it half full of water.

Tomorrow we'll fill it up.

June 25

The barrel soaked through during the night and by morning it had slopped leaking altogether. We had just filled it to the brim when we realized that it ought to be standing off the ground so the water could drip on to the board. So we had to empty out all the water, stand the barrel on a small platform and fill it up again. Then we plugged up the opening, leaving a tiny hole for the water to drip from. Finally it was

ready and soon a bee settled on the board and started poking at the wet board with its proboscis. In a little while other bees came over to drink and we felt that our labour had been rewarded.

After that we had a Pioneer meeting and Galya told the others what our group had been doing. Everybody was very interested and the boys from Group Two wanted to drop their work on the plot and join us.

"No," said Galya, "that won't do. Who will work on the experimental plot if you all take up bee-keeping?"

"We won't give up our work, we'll just come and look at the bees when we have time," they said.

"That's another matter," said Galya. "You are welcome to come whenever you like so long as you don't neglect your own work. The garden is important too, you know."

#### June 26

Today we watched where the bees go for nectar and we found that they don't go any further than our experimental plot. The cucumbers, marrows and pumpkins are in bloom and all the rows are covered with little yellow flowers. We watched the bees flying from flower to flower, crawling right inside the little flower-cups close to the ground.

One bee crawled into a pumpkin flower and came out covered all over with yellow pollen. We noticed that some of the bees flew some where across the street but we couldn't follow them because they flew too high. They go to the park most likely.

#### June 27

Yura brought some honey in a glass to feed the bees with. He spread a little on a piece of glass and laid it down not far from the hive. The bees flew past without paying any attention to the treat we had prepared for them. Zhenya caught one bee by placing a tumbler over it and dropped it right on the honey. The bee began eating the honey at once. We watched to see what it would do. After it had eaten for some time it flew back into the hive. Soon another one came out of the hive and flew over to the honey and began eating. Then it too flew away and in a minute or two another bee came straight over to the honey just as if it had known that the honey was there. We were astonished: how could they know about the honey?

"Zhenya's bee must have told them," I said.

The others laughed at me. "Bees can't talk to each other," they said.

"But how did the other bee know there was honey here?"

"Perhaps it just happened to notice it while flying past."

When it had flown away, Fedya said: "Let's hide the honey and see what happens."

We took the piece of glass with the honey away. In a few minutes we saw a bee come out of the hive and make straight for the place where the honey had been. It hovered there buzzing angrily. It was quite plain that the bee knew the honey had been there. So someone had told it. It hovered there for a long time, so we put the honey back and it flew straight at it, ate some and flew away. We tried shifting the honey a little further away from the first place. Pretty soon a bee came out of the hive and flew to the old place. It seemed surprised to find the honey gone and it buzzed around until it found the honey. But the next bee went straight to the new place.



I was delighted.

"You see!" I said. "That means someone told it the honey had been moved."

We watched the bees all day long. Each time we moved the honey the bees flew first to where it had been before and then began looking for it. It was easy to see that they had some way of talking to one another.

But how do they talk? I have been thinking about this ever since I got home. If they can talk they must have tongues. But how can we find out whether they really do have tongues? They are such tiny things. And if they can talk that means they must have ears as well. Tomorrow I am going to see whether they have ears or not.

June 28

Bees don't have ears. I examined one of them very closely but I didn't see any sign of ears. In fact, I don't think they hear at all. I tried shouting at them but they didn't pay the slightest attention.

Nina Sergeyevna came to look at our hive today and we told her about our experiment. She asked us to demonstrate for her, so we caught a bee and put it on the glass with the honey. The bee ate the honey and flew back to the hive and a few minutes later a bee came out of the hive and flew straight over to the honey.

"See that!" we cried. "That means the first bee told it about the honey."

"Let us try marking this bee," said Nina Sergeyevna. She explained that you can mark bees by dabbing a little paint on their backs. Tolya ran home and fetched his paint-box, and as soon as the bee settled on the honey he quickly put a dab of white paint on its back. The bee was so busy eating that it didn't notice anything. It didn't fly away until it had filled itself with honey. We waited a few minutes and what do we see but the same bee coming out of the hive and making straight for the honey. We watched it eat some more honey and fly back to the hive. In a little while it was back again. We were amazed.



"What a greedy bee!" I said. "She will burst if she's not careful."

But Nina Sergeyevna told us the bee wasn't eating at all. It had taken as much honey as it could carry back to the hive for the

honeycomb. All bees do that. Whenever they find nectar they take it at once to the hive.

The bee with the white mark on it came back again and again and we saw that what we had thought were several bees had actually been only one bee.

"Then they don't talk to one another after all?"

"They don't talk like people, of course," said Nina Sergeyevna. "But they do have some way of communicating with one another. They have their own language. If you observe them carefully you may be able to find out how they do it."

June 29

Today we tried another experiment to see whether a bee could find its way back home if we took it a long way from the hive.

I caught one of the bees with a tumbler so it wouldn't escape and took it home. I told the boys I would mark it and let it fly from my balcony.

The boys waited behind to see whether the marked bee would come back. On my way home I held the glass up to let the bee see where we were going. But I made sure to keep the tumbler covered so it wouldn't fly away.

To make sure that the bee wouldn't fly away before I got it marked, I put a saucer of honey on the balcony and set the tumbler with the bee on it. When the bee settled on the honey I carefully took off the tumbler and put a dab of paint on its back. It went on calmly eating the honey. After a while it flew away and I hurried back to school. On the way I met Seryozha.

"She came back!" he cried. "She's there already!"

We jumped with joy right in the middle of the street. What a clever bee! Imagine a tiny little thing like that finding its way over such a distance!

"Give me the tumbler, we'll experiment with another bee."

But I had left the tumbler at home. We ran back to my house. I was just going to take the saucer with the honey off the balcony when a bee came and settled on the honey and started eating. We examined it and saw that it had a dab of paint on its back.

"Why, it's the same bee! It came back for more honey."

"Some bee!" said Seryozha. "Found its way home and came all the way back for more honey."



"Let's wait a bit. Maybe it will come back again," I suggested.

We waited, and in about ten minutes the bee came back. It came twenty times before the afternoon was over. Wonderful insect! If it was a fly it would have filled itself up with honey and flown away, but the bee didn't only think of itself, it carried home honey for the other bees in the hive. Some people could take an example from bees.

June 30

There was one thing that puzzled us: why was it that when you put a bee on some honey a long way from the hive it remembered the place and came back for more, but if you put some honey close to the hive the bees would fly past without seeing it.

Nina Sergeyevna told us to try another experiment.

"Take two bits of glass and put some honey on each of them. Put one piece on the ground and lay the other on a piece of coloured paper and see where the bees alight first."

We did as she said. We put one bit of glass with honey right on the grass and laid the other on a piece of light-blue paper. At first the bees flew past both of them without noticing the honey. But after a while one bee settled on the glass that lay on the blue paper. We marked that bee, and in a little while it came back, and presently another, unmarked bee came and settled on the same place. We marked that one too. In a couple of hours five bees had come to the honey on the blue paper and not one had settled on the other piece of glass.

"It must be the colour that attracts them," said Vitya.

"That's right," said Nina Sergeyevna. "Now you know why flowers have such bright colours. It is to attract bees and other insects."

"But why should the flowers want to attract bees?" I asked.

"Because the bees help with pollination. The more bees and other insects settle on the flowers the better they are pollinated and the more seed they produce."

Nina Sergeyevna told us that not all plants are pollinated by insects. Some plants, like rye, for instance, depend on the wind for pollination. Rye flowers are so small that bees and other insects do not notice them.

How wonderful nature is! I used to wonder why flowers were so beautiful, and now it turns out that there is a good reason for it. Plants that are pollinated by insects have lovely big flowers so that the

insects can find them easily and help to scatter the pollen. That means that beautiful flowers are not only nice to look at but useful too.

### July 1

We are still experimenting with our bees. Today we took two pieces of paper, red and blue, dropped some honey on them and put a bee on the blue paper. The bee began carrying the honey back to the hive from the blue paper. It kept returning to the blue paper and paid no attention to the red paper lying beside it although there was honey on that as well. After a while we switched the papers. The bee flew back to where the blue paper had been, but when it saw the red paper there it did not settle but buzzed around and around until it found the blue paper. Then we moved the blue paper a little farther away, but the bee searched for it and found it.

We experimented with other colours and found that the bee always flies back to the colour on which it found the honey. That means that bees can not only tell colours apart, but they remember them as well. That is why they can always return to the flowers that give the most honey.

Tomorrow Grisha and Fedya are going off to a Pioneer camp. They said good-bye to us today and said they won't be coming to the hive any more. Fedya said he was sorry to have to part with the bees even to go to summer camp. But we told him not to worry, we would take good care of the bees.

### July 2

The more we observe the bees the more we marvel at them. Bees aren't very different from flies to look at, but actually they're not at all alike. Flies are silly good-for-nothings. All they do is buzz and crawl about where they're not wanted, annoying people and spreading all kinds of diseases besides. But bees are always doing something useful. They work together with the other bees, each one working not for itself but for the whole community. And what wonderful things they do! Today we came to the hive and what do you think we found? Several bees were sitting at the entrance with their wings whirring like little engines. At first we thought they had got stuck to the board and couldn't fly. We drove them off but they flew back and started whirring their wings again. We ran to Nina Sergeyevna and asked her what it could mean.

"They're ventilating the hive," she said. "It is a very hot day and the hive gets stuffy in hot weather, so they are cooling it." Didn't I say they were wonderful! They even have their own ventilation system.

Another exciting thing happened today. My mother and dad came and visited our hive.

### July 3

Another hot day. The bees spent most of the day ventilating the hive and flying back and forth between the water barrel and the hive. There seemed to be two long lines of them in the air, one going from the hive to the barrel, the other from the barrel to the hive.

We couldn't make out why they went back to the hive after they had drunk. Nina Sergeyevna told us to mark the bees that came for water. Tolya marked them and we soon noticed that the same bees came for water all the time.

"It's a sort of water team!" cried Fedya. "They must be carrying water back to the hive."

"That's it," said Nina Sergeyevna. "In hot weather some of the bees always carry water to the hive for those who are working inside."

"But can't they come for water themselves?" I asked.

Nina Sergeyevna explained that labour in a beehive is strictly divided. The young bees who haven't yet learned to go out in search of nectar work inside the hive, building the comb, keeping the hive clean, ventilating it and feeding the baby-bees. It's the older bees who go out for honey and carry water to the hive in hot weather.

"What a pity we can't see them working inside," said Zhenya.

Nina Sergeyevna said there are glass hives through which you can observe the bees inside the hive.

We shall have a hive like that some day.

### July 4

Today Nina Sergeyevna said that the lime-tree will soon be blossoming and we must prepare for the main take.

"What is that?" we asked.

"That's the time when a great many flowers blossom at once—clover, buckwheat, acacia, maple or willows—and when the bees lay up the main stores of honey."

"But we haven't any clover or buckwheat."

"But we have lime-trees. Our bees will get their main store from there."

Nina Sergeyevna showed us how to make an extension to the hive, a sort of storehouse with extra frames for the big honey supply. Then she told us to watch for the lime-trees in flower, and as soon as the first blossoms appeared to add the extra frames.

### July 5

The lime-trees haven't blossomed yet. I climbed up one myself to make sure, but the buds hadn't opened.

Galya saw me up the tree.

"What are you doing up there? Get down at once!"

"I was checking up on the blossoms."

"You don't need to climb the tree for that. You will see the flowers when they open."

.But I am glad I made sure. It would be too bad if we missed it.

### July 6

I have noticed that there are always two or three bees at the entrance of the hive. The others fly in and out, but these bees stay in one place and don't fly anywhere. I wondered what they could be doing there. Today I found out.

A bumble-bee tried to get into the hive. He buzzed round and round the hive, looking for some way of getting in and gorging himself on honey. When he didn't find any hole he tried going through the entrance but the bees at the opening pounced on him and drove him away.

He flew off as quickly as he could but they caught up with him and stung him. Serves him right for trying to steal the honey. The bees didn't work hard gathering the honey so some lazy old bumble-bee could come and gobble it up. He didn't gather any honey, so he has no right to eat it.

I guessed that those bees at the entrance to the hive were probably sentries who guard the hive from thieves like the bumble-bee. I asked Nina Sergeyevna and she said I was right.

So I am not so thick-headed after all.

Nina Sergeyevna told us that bees often die, defending their hive. If some big beast, a bear for instance, invades the hive, the whole bee swarm attacks and stings the invader. But they all die, because bees can't live without their stings. So you see how brave they are.

### July 7

We have made an important contribution to science: today Zhenya Shemyakin invented a way of seeing inside the hive. He directed a sunbeam into the hive with a mirror so that it lit up the interior. Of course only one of us could look in at a time, so we all took turns. I thought my turn would never come. Vitya Almazov who was in front of me took such a long time that I lost patience. Every time I tried to hurry him up he said: "Wait a minute!" I must have waited a whole hour before he finally gave me the mirror, but by that time the sun had moved away and I couldn't see anything. I was furious.

"What did you give me the mirror for when the sun has gone?"

"Is it my fault the sun has gone?"

The mean selfish beast! Tomorrow I'll get a mirror and go to the hive before any of the others and look as much as I wish.

At home I read an item in the paper about honey. It turns out that honey is used as a medicine. People with stomach trouble, weak hearts, lungs or nerves, or some other complaint must eat honey and they will get well very quickly. And if you have a boil or an abscess you only have to smear a little honey on it and bind it up with a cloth and it will soon disappear.

### July 8

I got up early and went to the hive with a mirror but there was no sun. It was cloudy all day. Just my luck!

We had a Pioneer meeting again and all the groups reported on their work. We told about our experiments, and Shura, who leads Group Two, reported about their work on the experimental plot. He said they expected a big cucumber crop, much bigger than last year.

There is a simple explanation for that: last year we didn't keep bees, this year our bees helped pollinate the cucumbers.

July 9

At last the sun came out. I put on my net, pulled on a pair of mittens so the bees wouldn't sting me and sat down beside the hive with my mirror. What a thrilling sight it was! The honeycombs were swarming with bees; they were crawling in a black mass back and forth over the combs, crawling inside the cells and crawling out again. It must have been hot inside the hive because I saw the bees working with their wings like the ones we had seen at the entrance. Each little bee looked like a tiny ventilation fan. I was dying to see the baby-bees but I couldn't see any sign of them. Later on I asked Nina Sergeyevna why there weren't any baby-bees in our hive.

"What do you think baby-bees look like?" she asked me.

"I thought they would be little bees," I said.

Nina Sergeyevna laughed. "No," she said. "They aren't like that. Tomorrow we'll open the hive and I shall show you what they look like."

I told all the others to be sure and come tomorrow to see the baby-bees.

July 10

This morning our whole group met at the hive. Soon Nina Sergeyevna came. She told us how the bees breed their young. It turns out that not all the wax cells the bees make are for storing the honey, some of them are used for breeding the young. Every bee family has a queen bee who does nothing but lay the eggs. The other bees can't lay eggs, they can only work, and that is why they are called workers. The queen bee lays about two thousand eggs in a day. She lays them in the empty wax cells which are like very small nests—one egg to each cell.

Nina Sergeyevna told us to open the hive and take out one of the frames. At first we thought the combs were empty, but Nina Sergeyevna told us that if we looked closely we would see the eggs. And sure enough, we looked and saw a tiny little egg, no bigger than a poppy seed, lying at the bottom of every cell. Only poppy seeds are black and the eggs are white.

We couldn't imagine how bees could ever come out of such tiny eggs, but Nina Sergeyevna said that it is not bees that come out of the eggs but larvae, which are like tiny little worms or caterpillars. Nina Sergeyevna examined the honeycomb and found some cells with larvae. Some of them were very small, others a little bigger. They were curled up at the bottom of the cells.

"These larvae are the bees' children," said Nina Sergeyevna. We were very surprised to hear that.

"But how can these worms grow up to be bees? They'll be worms or caterpillars, won't they?"

"No, the larva develops into pupa, and after a few days a full-grown bee emerges from the pupa."

Nina Sergeyevna also told us that besides workers the bees rear young queen bees and drones. They make specially large cells for the young queens, and just before a young queen emerges from the pupa, part of the bees fly away from the hive with the old queen and form a swarm of their own. If the swarm is placed in some other hive you will have a new bee family. The drones are a little larger than the workers. The workers are the females, and the drones are the males. The drones don't gather honey, but they have terrific appetites. When winter comes the bees drive all the drones out of the hive so that they won't devour all the stores of honey.

I thought a lot about bees after what Nina Sergeyevna had told us. At first I thought that bees must be rather like birds, because birds also have wings and lay eggs. But then I remembered that when the bird sits on her eggs she hatches out fledglings, but bees don't sit on their eggs and the eggs turn into larvae. So bees aren't really like birds. No, bees are more like butterflies. Butterflies also have wings and they also lay eggs which turn into caterpillars and the caterpillar turns into a chrysalis and the chrysalis turns into a butterfly. I know that because last summer I had a large furry caterpillar in a box which turned into a chrysalis. It lay in the box for a long time until one fine day out came a beautiful butterfly. So perhaps bees are really little butterflies.

July 11

It was lovely and sunny today. I came to the hive in the morning to find Tolya sitting with his mirror peering into the upper opening and chuckling to himself.

"What's the joke?" I asked him.

"They're dancing."

"Who's dancing?"

"The bees!"

"You're crazy!"

"All right, take a look yourself."

I took the mirror from him and peeped inside.

I saw a bee hopping about on the comb. I saw it turn from side to side and spin around quickly. Suddenly another bee ran after it and they started spinning together. Then a third joined in. They looked so funny I couldn't help laughing.

"They've been at it for quite a long time," said Tolya. "I've been watching them."

I looked into the lower entrance and down on the floor of the hive I saw a whole crowd of bees dancing in a ring. One of them was leading the dance and the others followed it, imitating all its movements. The leader whirled round and round and the others did the same. Then the leader flew over to another place and began dancing there, and gradually the others joined it and they all danced together again.

When the other boys came up we showed them the bees dancing.

"What the dickens does that mean?" said Vitya. "Perhaps it is some sort of bees' holiday?"

We all laughed at the idea of bees having holidays.

We ran to Nina Sergeyevna and asked her why the bees were dancing and she told us that whenever a bee finds a place where there are a great many flowers it comes back to the hive and dances. That is its way of letting the other bees know where to go for nectar. The others swarm around it and smell it and they can tell by the scent what flowers it gathered the nectar from. After that the bees fly out to where the flowers are.

"You will find that the bees dance mostly at the time of the main take," said Nina Sergeyevna. "I think you ought to see whether the lime-trees are in bloom."

We hurried over to the school. There were several large old-lime-trees in the garden. We looked up and saw that the little pale-yellow flowers had opened and the bees were already swarming over them. We ran back to our hive and put on the extension. Our bees went on dancing inside the hive until evening. One bee even danced out or. to the alighting-board and then flew off.



I thought a lot about the bees when I got home this evening. So that is how the bees talk to each other! When they want to tell one another where to go for nectar they dance. Of course they cannot speak to one another, but they can find the way by the scent. That means that their sense of smell is very highly developed, much better than ours. There is nothing really surprising about that, because dogs also have a better sense of smell than human beings. But then dogs are so much bigger than bees.

Then I thought about flowers. Why do they smell so nice? Just to give pleasure to human beings? No, the scent of flowers, like their colour, must be meant to attract the bees and help pollination. The more bees and other insects settle on plants the better for the plants. And here's another thing: why do flowers have nectar? Isn't that also to attract insects? I shall ask Nina Sergeyevna tomorrow.

## July 12

I asked Nina Sergeyevna and she said I was right.

I'm getting quite clever, it seems. It's thinking that does it. From now on I'm always going to think about all sorts of things. It broadens your mind.

Our bees were terribly busy all day today. They filled the air with a constant hum like the hum at the textile mill where Galya took us last month. The bees rush in and out of the hive, they seem to be in a hurry to stock up as much nectar as they can while the lime-tree is in bloom. The alighting-board has been jammed all day with bees hurrying out of the hive to fly off for nectar and bees hurrying back with their load. And the trees are simply swarming with them. You can hardly see the flowers for the bees. There are thousands of them. We never thought we had so many bees.

Nina Sergeyevna says that during the main-take season there can be as many as eighty thousand workers in the hive, and some very big families have as many as one hundred thousand.

One hundred thousand! Just think of it. Like the population of a town. But come to think of it, a hive is a bee town.

## July 13

Work is humming! The bees buzz back and forth like squadrons of airplanes. The alighting-board is still crowded and inside the hive

there was dancing again today. It really does look like a holiday. Perhaps the honey-gathering season is a holiday for the bees? After all, they must be very happy to be gathering so much nectar. They will have plenty laid aside for the winter.

July 14

How exciting! We've got into the newspapers! When we came to the school garden this morning Vitya came running up with a news paper in his hand.

"Look at this, boys!" he yelled. "We're in the paper!"

We looked at the paper and there was the photograph Galya had taken of us beside the hive and an item about us, describing how we had made our own hive and started bee-keeping. All our names were there too and the address of our school.

We hurried to the nearest news-stand and bought newspapers. Pavlik and I bought two each. We tried to guess who it was that had written about us.

"It must be Galya," said Yura. "She took that photo. She must have sent the photo and the item to the paper."

We ran to Galya and asked her if it was she who had written the item and she said it was. We thanked her.

"You needn't thank me," she said. "You made the hive and did all the work yourselves, so you can thank yourselves."

We ran home to show the paper to our folks. Seryozha and Pavlik and I were on our way home when Pavlik said:

"We have nothing to thank ourselves for."

"Yes, if it was left to us there wouldn't be any hive," agreed Seryozha. "We ought to thank the others for carrying on when we gave up."

"We got into the newspaper under false pretences, so we've nothing to boast about."

"Yes," said Pavlik, "people will read our names in the paper and say: 'What fine boys!' If they only knew."

"I shan't show the newspaper to anyone," said Seryozha.

"Neither shall I," said Pavlik.



I don't know about them, but I showed the paper to everybody. I showed it to Mother and Dad and Uncle Vasya and Aunt Nadya, and to all the neighbours as well. Everybody praised me and made such a fuss of me I began to feel uncomfortable. My conscience began bothering me, and that started me thinking about conscience and what it is and why it bothers you. Why is it that when you are good your conscience doesn't give you the slightest twinge, but when you do something mean or bad it pricks you like anything.

I think that conscience is a little man who lives inside of me, a very good little man who wants me to be good too and who makes me feel miserable when I am bad. But I know that's only my notion, and there really isn't anyone inside of me except myself. So it's I who reproach myself, and my conscience is me.

Why do I reproach myself now? For having boasted to the neighbours, for making them think I'm somebody of importance when actually I haven't done anything worth talking about. Next time I shan't boast if I have nothing to boast about.

July 15

The news of our hive has spread all over the school and today we were visited by pupils from lower forms and some from the senior forms too. We showed them our hive and told them all we had learned about bee-keeping. They said they would come and learn bee keeping from us.

Later on a man came, a stranger.

"Are you the boys the paper wrote about?" he asked.

"That's us."

"And this is your beehive, I suppose? May I have a look at it?"

"Of course."

He squatted down beside the hive and sat watching the bees for a long time. Finally he got up and said:

"Remarkable! I'd never have believed it!" And he went away.

There! Even grown-ups are beginning to take an interest in our work. And all because of that item in the newspaper. If it wasn't for that nobody would have heard about us at all.

### July 16

Today two boys from another school came to see us. They also read about us in the paper and came purposely to see our hive. They want to make one too. When they had gone, the man who came yesterday turned up again. He stayed and talked with us for a long time, but then a bee stung him and he went away.

### July 17

We are getting quite famous! Today Galya came to us and said there was a letter for us.

We were very much surprised. Who could have written to us? We ran inside and got the letter. Here it is (I brought it home to copy into my diary). It is from the pupils of a cabinet-makers school.

"Dear young bee-keepers! We read about you in the newspaper and would like to correspond with you. We are very much interested in what you are doing and now we want to follow your example and take up bee-keeping. We would be very grateful if you would give us the measurements of the hive and, if possible, send us the drawings. We are learning to make furniture. We already know how to make stools, tables and benches and next year we are going over to bent-wood furniture. So we ought to be able to make a good hive and perhaps later on we can make hives for other boys who go in for bee-keeping. Please let us know where to get bees. We are looking forward to your reply. We send you warmest greetings and best wishes for further success."

We had a Pioneer meeting today and Galya read the letter out and we decided to answer it at once. We wrote them a long letter, giving them all the instructions, enclosing drawings of the hive and the address of the apiary which sent us our bees.

July 18

We received another letter today. It is from a little boy named Mitya Romashkin. A very decent letter for a little boy. We liked it very much. Here it is:

"Dear friends! I am a bee-keeper too. Ever since last year I have been trying to keep bees in a box, but I can't get them to stay there.

They keep flying away. I put honey and sugar in the box, but they eat the honey and fly away. Yesterday I caught another ten bees but now they've gone too. I want ever so much to collect a lot of bees so that when I grow up I can have a hive or even two hives and become a bee-keeper. Please tell me how I can keep the bees from flying away from me, because they simply won't stay no matter what I do. Also tell me do the bees sting you, because they sting me something awful, but I try to bear it bravely like the soldiers at the front. Please write and tell me what to do. Your friend, Mitya Romashkin."

We had a good laugh over Mitya's letter until we remembered that we had also tried catching bees one by one. So we stopped laughing and wrote a long letter to Mitya, telling him all we knew about bees. It took us quite a long time to write the letter. After that we went to our hive.

July 19

We get letters every day now. Today one came addressed to me personally: "Kolya Sinitsin, the famous bee-keeper," it said on the envelope. I was terribly thrilled. My hands shook with excitement when I opened it.

"Dear unknown friend Kolya Sinitsin!" it began. "You will probably be surprised to get a letter from a girl you have never seen before and whom you might not even want to know now that you are such a famous person with your name in the newspapers and every thing. I also read about you in the newspaper which printed your photograph and a description of the work done by your Pioneer group. We read the item at a Pioneer meeting and resolved to follow your example and go in for bee-keeping too.

"You may smile when you read this because some boys look down on girls and imagine that they are no good for anything. But we have decided to show that girls are just as good as boys and we are going to take up bee-keeping. A knowledge of bees may come in handy for

many of us when we grow up and go to work in the collective-farm apiary.

"The Pioneer group elected me to write and ask you to tell us how you made your hive and how to take care of bees. But I thought I would write a personal letter to you because I like your name and I believe that you must be a very nice boy and that you will not refuse to help us. That will be all for now. With Pioneer greetings, Lusya Abanova."

I did not much like the idea of writing to this girl Lusya at first, but the others said I should. Galya said I must write at once and tell Lusya and her friends all they wanted to know. If the girls wished to keep bees it was our duty to help them.

So I went home and sat down to write a letter. I laboured over it for a whole hour, trying very hard to write neatly and not make any mistakes, so that the girl wouldn't be able to find any fault with it. When I finished I read it over and it sounded very nice to me. Very nice indeed. I read it to the boys and they said no one would be ashamed to send a letter like that.

July 20

Today we had more visitors, boys mostly, but also that man who came before and who got stung last time. We were afraid he would get stung again, so we gave him a net to put on his head. When Nina Sergeyevna came he began asking her all sorts of questions.

"Excuse me," he said, "but is this hive intended only for study purposes or has it some practical use besides?"

"Both," answered Nina Sergeyevna.

"Now what practical use can it have? Is it really possible to keep bees in town?"

"Of course it is. The bees can get all the nectar they want from the blossoms of maples, lime-trees, acacias, willows, bird-cherries and various other trees and bushes that grow in the parks, gardens and boulevards. Besides, bees often -go a long way for nectar, they can fly out to the suburbs and gather honey in the fields outside of town. It is an old-fashioned notion that bees can only be kept in the country. In modern cities like Moscow it is quite possible to keep bees."

"In that case I shall begin at once," said the man. "The trouble is I don't know where to put the hive."

"Oh, bees are not so fussy as you might think," said Nina Sergeyevna.

"You can put your hive in your back yard, on your balcony, in. your attic or even in a shed."

"Bees on the balcony, eh? That's an idea!" said the man. "There now, who would have thought it? What progress science is making!"

He thanked Nina Sergeyevna, shook hands with her, promised to come again to study our bees if we didn't mind, and walked off with the net still on his head. We had to run after him to get it back.

#### July 21

It was very hot today and the bees did not do much work. They hung close together at the entrance, spilling out on to the alighting-board in a solid mass, like a black beard. The "beard" hung there for a long time and then the bees crawled back into the hive. After a while they came out again, still sticking close together, and hung for some time. Finally they went back into the hive and stayed there.

#### July 22

When Seryozha and Pavlik and I came to the hive this morning we found the bees crowding together again at the entrance. We thought they were going to form a "beard" again, but suddenly they all flew up in a mass and started circling over the hive, buzzing loudly. Soon other bees joined them until it began to look like a regular stampede. We got frightened and hid behind a tree, watching the bees fly round and round the garden. They made such a noise you could have heard them a mile away.

"What's the matter with them?" said Pavlik.

"I know!" cried Seryozha. "It's a swarm."

"So it is! Where are we going to put them?"

"We need a pail," I suggested.

"Yes, you two run home for one and I'll stay here and see what happens," said Pavlik.

Seryozha and I raced down the street. I hunted all over the house for a pail but I couldn't find a spare one, so I snatched up the large cardboard box the radio set had been packed in and dashed out again. When I got back to the school yard I found Seryozha racing up and down the garden with a pail, but there was no sign of Pavlik.

"Where's Pavlik?" I asked.

"Dunno. I've hunted all over for him, but I can't find him."

"Where's the swarm?"

"The swarm's gone too."

We stopped and looked around us. Just then Pavlik's head popped up from behind the fence.

"What are you standing there for? Come here quick!"

We climbed over the fence into the next yard. Seryozha caught his foot on the fence going over and dropped the pail. It fell with a loud clatter on the other side.

"Keep quiet, can't you!" hissed Pavlik. "You'll frighten the swarm!"

"Where is it?"

"Look!" He pointed to a tree near the fence. The swarm was hanging from a branch of the tree in a tight bunch except for a few bees which buzzed around the swarm as if trying to find a place to attach themselves to.

"Give me the pail," said Pavlik.

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"Perhaps this box will be better?" I suggested. "It's bigger!"

"All right, let me have it."

I tiptoed up to the swarm and stood the box under it. Pavlik shook the branch and the swarm dropped into the box. I quickly put the lid on.

"There," I said. "Now they won't fly away."

We climbed back over the fence and found the other boys standing around the hive.

"Come and look!" I shouted. "We've got a swarm!"

"Where?"

"Here in the box."

"Where did you get it?"

"It flew out of the hive."

I lifted the lid a little and showed them the bees inside.





"Isn't that wonderful!" they said. "Now we'll have a brand-new bee family. We'll have to get busy and make another hive straight away."

We got our tools and set to work at once. Nina Sergeyevna came and we showed her the swarm in the box.

"They chose the wrong time to leave the hive," she said.

"Why?"

"Because this is the honey season, and when the bees swarm they gather very little nectar."

"That's all right," we said. "We don't need much honey. We'd rather have more bees."

By evening the hive was ready. We made several new frames for it and took one frame with larvae and another with honey from the old hive so that the new family should feel at home in the new hive. Then we shook the swarm out of the box into the hive, covered it up and went home.

Seryozha, Pavlik and I are very pleased with ourselves because if it hadn't been for us the swarm would have got away. So we aren't altogether useless.

July 23

Yesterday Nina Sergeyevna told us to keep a close watch over the new swarm because the bees do not always take to their new quarters and are apt to fly away to look for some other home. We came specially early in the morning to watch. For a long time nothing happened and then at last a bee flew out of the new hive, turned facing the entrance as if taking note of the place, then circled over the hive and flew off. Soon other bees appeared and they too flew round the hive several times before flying away. We were afraid they wouldn't find the way back to their new home and would fly into the old hive by mistake, but after a while they came back and went straight into the new hive. We jumped for joy—we were so glad that they liked the new home we made for them.

July 24

We spent all morning watching our bees. Both hives are hard at work, but the bees in the new hive seem to be more energetic. They don't waste a single moment—as soon as they come out of the hive they spread their little wings and off they go for nectar. Nina Sergeyevna said that the swarm always works harder in a new hive because the bees have little time left to store up a supply of honey for the winter.

July 25

It is very windy today and the sky is overcast. The sun peeps out now and again and then hides behind the clouds. It has rained several times. The bees in the old hive are staying indoors, but in the new hive work goes on as usual. As soon as the sun appears the bees fly out at once. It is a pleasure to watch them.

Fedya and Grisha have come back from summer camp. How quickly the time has passed! You can imagine how surprised they were to find two hives instead of one. They thought we had ordered another swarm and were amazed when we told them that the new swarm came from the old hive. Then we showed them the item in the

newspaper with our photograph and all the letters we had received. They were quite impressed.

"You've done wonders here while we've been away!" they said.

### July 26

The weather is very bad. It has rained nearly all day and both hives are quiet. We felt so dull without the bees that Galya proposed that we go to the pictures, and after dinner she bought tickets for the whole group and we went and saw a jolly picture.

### July 27

The main honey season is over. The lime-tree blossoms have faded and now the bees will have to hunt for nectar somewhere else. We were afraid that our new bee family would be left without honey for the winter, but Nina Sergeyevna said that we could spare some from the other hive. We took stock of our honey supply and found that there would be enough for both swarms.

"But there won't be any honey for you this year," she said.

"We don't want any honey," we said. "We'd rather the bees had it. After all they worked for it, so it really belongs to them."

"That's right," said Nina Sergeyevna. "That will give both swarms enough to winter on and next year they will gather so much that there will be plenty to spare for you."

"How lovely it will be to taste our own honey!" said Pavlik.

"But where will our bees spend the winter? Will we have to make a winter hive for them?" Yura asked.

"One or two hives can winter in any ordinary house cellar provided it is dry, or in a dug-out cellar."

We decided to make a dug-out cellar and to begin work tomorrow so as to provide our bees with a nice warm home for the winter in good time.

### July 28

We met first thing in the morning and set to work to dig a large hole at the bottom of the garden. We are going to cover the hole with planks, with a layer of earth on top to keep out the cold.

The ground is very hard and it was pretty hot work digging. But we kept it up all day until we had a nice big hole dug. Yura proposed that we make a bonfire at the bottom to dry the walls properly so it wouldn't be damp. We brought dry kindling and lit a big bonfire and picked up all the brushwood we could find to keep the fire going. It was evening by the time we had the fire started, and before long it was quite dark. When the fire burned itself out we cleaned out the ashes and sat there to rest after our hard day's work. It was nice and cosy sitting there in the hole looking up at the stars twinkling in the dark sky and listening to the wind whispering in the trees.

"I'll miss the bees an awful lot in winter," said Grisha. "I've got used to them, they're such jolly little things and such clever workers."

"I'll miss them too," said Fedya.

"Well, it's a long time till winter," Tolya consoled them. "Besides, in winter we'll be too busy at school to think about bees."

"That old bee-keeper was right," said Pavlik. "He said that once you start keeping bees you'll never want to give it up. I've made up my mind to be a bee-keeper too when I grow up. I'll be a bee-keeper at a collective farm. I'll have lots of hives, a hundred or two hundred. Two hundred most likely."

"It's all right for you," said Fedya. "But what about me? I'm going to be an engineer and build bridges and tunnels and canals. . . ."

"That doesn't matter," I said. "You can be an engineer and keep bees too. They won't prevent you from building bridges."

"Of course not," said Vitya. "I'm going to be a painter but I'll keep bees as well. Can't a person have two specialities?"

"If he's an artist, maybe he can," said Zhenya. "But I'm going to be a flyer."

"Well, what of it? You won't be flying all the time," I said.

"But suppose I have to go on a long-distance flight?"

"The bees will live without you. They don't need a nurse, they can look after themselves."

"Yes, it isn't so bad for a flyer," said Yura. "But I want to be a sailor or a captain, and ocean voyages sometimes take a whole year! What will happen to my bees then?"

"You can take your bees on board with you," I said. "You only have to close the entrance of the hive while you're at sea, and when you put in at some port you can let the bees out to feed on shore and they'll come back again. I think it would be fun to have a beehive on board ship."

I proved to all of them that anyone can keep bees if they want to—flyers, engine-drivers, miners, builders, anyone. When I went home I got to thinking what I would do myself about bee-keeping, because I have decided to work in the Arctic when I grow up and I don't think bees would be very comfortable in the Arctic. There aren't any flowers or trees up there, only ice and polar bears. Then I thought that perhaps by the time I grew up people would have started growing trees and flowers in the Arctic, so I could keep bees just as well up there as anywhere else. And if they hadn't, I would plant them myself, and in the meantime I would feed my bees with syrup. So it's settled: I am going to have bees in the Arctic.

July 29

We didn't think we would get any more letters but today another one came. We had all turned up at the apiary this morning, when Yura Kuskov came running up, waving a letter. He had dropped into the school office on his way to the apiary and found this letter waiting for us. We tore open the envelope and read the letter aloud.

"Dear friends! We, Pioneers from the Lenin's Path collective farm, read all about you in the newspapers and decided to write to you and tell you how ashamed we were to think that we, collective-farm Pioneers, had not yet built an apiary of our own while you city boys have your own bees. We decided to remedy our mistake at once and have already taken up the matter with our farm board and have been given two hives to start with. So we will have an apiary too.

"But you mustn't think, dear friends, that we have been altogether idle all this time. Our farm is situated in the steppes, a long way from the nearest town. The climate here is very severe, in winter-time we have terrible frosts and blizzards. Sometimes there is so much snow that we have to ski to school. In the summer it is very hot. The blazing sun and the hot dry winds dry everything up and the soil gets parched and cracked. To fight the drought the farmers have to plant shelter belts. We Pioneers decided to help them. Our school also has its garden and experimental plot where we all do our share of work and we mean to work for a bumper crop.

"Dear friends, we know that you in the towns also plant trees and flowers and help to lay out parks and gardens. Now you are beginning to keep bees as well. Congratulations! Let us pledge to work better

still, you in the town and we here in the village, so that we can contribute our small share to making our country bright and beautiful.

"Wishing you every success and hoping to hear from you, we close this letter with the Pioneer motto: For the Cause of Lenin-Stalin, Be Ready!"

"Always Ready!" we replied in chorus when we finished the letter.

When I went home I thought about that letter. I thought that we city Pioneers had really done very little compared to those collective-farm Pioneers and that we still had a long way to go before we could compete with them. I liked their letter very much and that is why I have copied it into my diary. Now I have finished copying it, I find I have come to the end of my diary and there's no more room to write.

I shall buy myself another note-book some time and continue my diary. But this will be all for the present.

Written by Pioneer Kolya Sinitsin

